

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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NOV 21 2007

To: Federal Flood Control Project Maintaining Agencies
Fall 2007 Levee Inspection Criteria

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is performing its fall levee inspections using revised criteria to evaluate vegetation and encroachments on the levees. The revised criteria are the result of a process initiated by the Corps of Engineers, DWR, the State Reclamation Board, and resources and levee maintaining agencies to develop short term and long term levee management strategies designed to protect public safety and habitat, provide visibility for inspections, allow flood fight access, and improve overall maintenance. Long term management strategies will incorporate the eventual decisions to be made regarding trees and other vegetation on levees.

While long term levee management issues are being addressed, DWR will apply short term vegetation and encroachment criteria that ensure visibility for inspection and flood fight access on the critical levee slopes. These criteria apply on the entire landside slope plus a 10 foot wide easement beyond the landside toe. On the water side these criteria apply to vegetation on only the top 20 feet (slope length) of the waterside levee slope. Trees within these areas must be trimmed up five feet above the ground (12 feet above the crown road) and thinned enough for visibility and access. Brush, weeds, or other vegetation over 12 inches high blocking visibility and access within these levee areas should be trimmed, thinned, mowed, burned, dragged, or otherwise removed in an allowed manner. Areas that are partially obstructed by vegetation will be rated Minimally Acceptable. Areas that are completely obstructed by vegetation will be rated Unacceptable.

Elderberries can also obstruct visibility and access and we will document and rate elderberries using the same criteria as all other vegetation as described above. Each levee maintaining agency is responsible for satisfying all environmental and resource agency requirements or laws that apply to the removal of vegetation.

Please see the enclosed drawings titled "DWR Vegetation Criteria for Standard Levees, October 2007". Any kind of vegetation is allowed 20 feet or more from the waterside hinge point (edge of the crown). These are minimum standards for levee vegetation maintenance and everything that does not currently meet these standards will be rated as Minimally Acceptable or Unacceptable. You do not have to allow vegetation to grow 20 feet or more beyond the waterside hinge point although you could do so and meet current inspection criteria. If you currently have clear levees we encourage you to continue to maintain them in that manner.

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Encroachments that obstruct visibility and access exist throughout the system and pose the same types of threats created by dense vegetation. This fall we are inspecting for and reporting on the following three types of encroachments:

1. Any encroachment that presents a threat to levee integrity;
2. Any encroachment that has no business being on the levee or easement, such as trash, prunings, or abandoned equipment;
3. Any encroachment that blocks visibility or access to the landside levee slope or 10 foot toe easement or the top 20 feet (slope length) of the waterside levee.

The first two types will be rated as Minimally Acceptable or Unacceptable, depending upon the seriousness and extent of the encroachment. The third type will be rated as Partially Obstructing (PO) or Completely Obstructing (CO), which correlate to ratings of Minimally Acceptable and Unacceptable, respectively. We understand that due to the complexities of encroachments, it will take time to resolve those issues.

Minimally Acceptable items that are not corrected could be rated Unacceptable in future inspections. Any rating of Minimally Acceptable or Unacceptable will need to be improved.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Jim Eckman at jeckman@water.ca.gov or (916) 574-2020.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Arrich, Chief
Flood Project Integrity and Inspection Branch

Enclosure

FIGURE 1: ND BERM

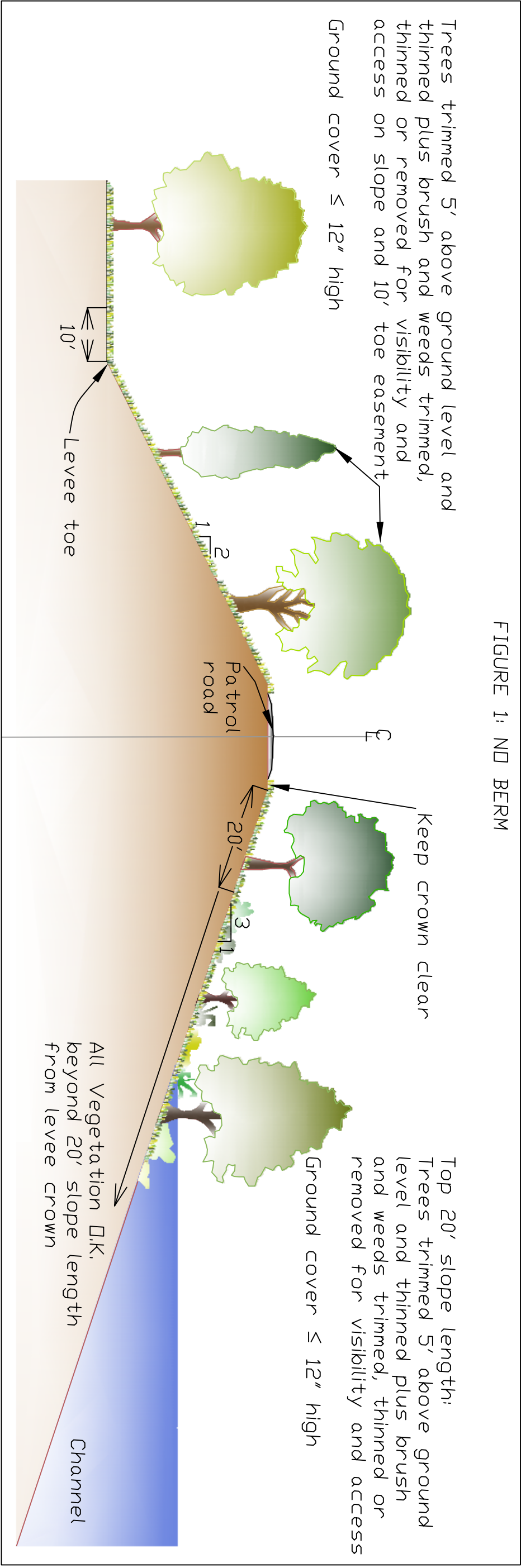


FIGURE 2: LANDSIDE BERM

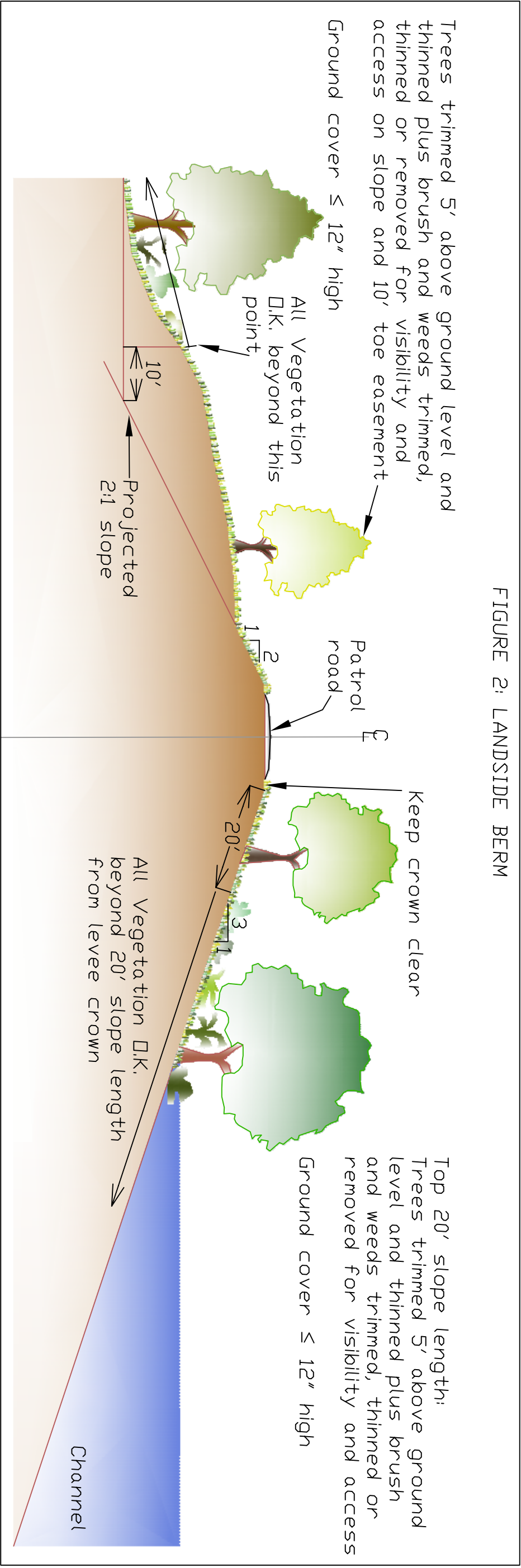


FIGURE 3: WATERSIDE BERM

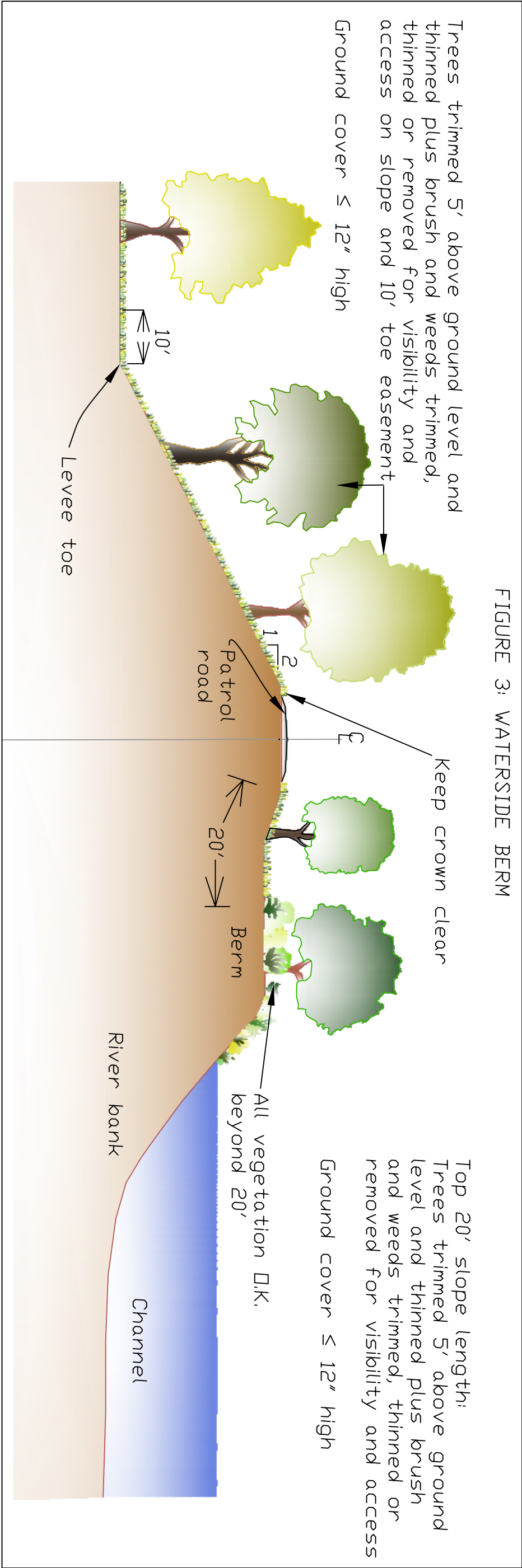


FIGURE 4: SHORT LEVEE

